

Finding Strength to live

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Shinji is put under a protection program for his own safety and he finds himself living with a distant relative. How will he and the others find the strength to live in their new lives.

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Finding Strength to live

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Prologue: Danger

I've actually had this story planned for a very VERY long time and even wrote it out a couple of times but never really intending to publish it! But since my brothers and sister got hooked onto it after they heard it, they like it a lot, so I decided I might as well try and see what other people think about it!

Disclaimers: the cast of NGE is of course not mine. If it were, I'd make the ending a little different. It belongs to GAINAX and all the other big corporations that own it.

Um. I don't think it has ANY pairings at all. Well, at least, I didn't plan on any other than the normal Misato x Kaji. Okay, now on with the story. ^_ ^

+...+ means thoughts *...* Author's thoughts [.] change of environment

Finding strength to Live Prologue: Danger

A lone child walks down an empty street with plastic bags of groceries in both hands. His head hangs low on his shoulders, not bothering to look where he was going. There was no point, half of the cities population is gone. Of course, they had good reasons to leave, with their homes destroyed, they had to move to the other cities such as Tokyo 2.

Shinji is left only with the voices of his thoughts and the sounds of trickling water drops.

+Why do I even bother cooking? There's no point.+

Shinji quietly contemplate this question.

It has been 3 weeks after Kaworu Nagisa's death, and Shinji no longer considers suicide as an option of escape. However, life has become so meaningless, even with Asuka and Misato.

+Asuka has been finally released from hospital, that's got to be a good thing. However, she stays in her room all the time, only coming out to eat, to the toilet and the bath; never uttering a single word.+

+She's acting more and more like Rei.+

Shinji switches his attention from worrying about Asuka to the changes in the personality of Rei.

With the death of the last angel, Rei found herself without any purpose of living. She quietly contemplates death. However, ironically, she is the last of her kind, does that mean she cannot be replaced anymore, does that mean she has some worth after all, since she is the only one left. During this mental crisis, she often take trips to the Library, not to read books on philosophy or sociology, instead she reads fictional stories to runaway from her worries. Her favourite stories are those that deal with emotional relationships such as romances.

Without any more angel attacks, Rei started to experience a strange sensation, boredom. And so, she experimented with doing things the normal people do, such as going to the park, learning how to cook and clean up her messy apartment. With everything she did, came the experience of satisfaction and she started to smile more often. Rei no longer calls Misato 'Major' or Maya 'Lieutenant' or even Shinji as 'Pilot Ikari'.

+Misato seems to become even more busy now the city is under construction by orders from the commanders. I wonder what she is doing?+

Misato rarely comes home, and even if she does, it's always late at night. There's no point in preparing her lunch or dinner because she always orders takeaways anyway.

Not only Misato, but everybody seem to be busy, all except the pilots that is. The commanders must be planning some thing.

[In the Commander Ikari's office]

Two forms reside in a silent dark room. One sitting behind an uncluttered desk while the other stands impatiently before the first.

Fuyutski broke the silence with his slightly shocked accusation: "An all out war against SEELE!? Are you sure about this, Ikari?!"

Commander Ikari, the supreme commander of Nerv Central, replied back indifferently: "positive."

"But what would SEELE gain from the total annihilation of Tokyo 3? There are so many innocent people living here!! SEELE wouldn't jeopardise all these civilians, they couldn't!!" Fuyutski denied.

Commander Ikari's monotonous tone answered back: "They gain Adam and Lillith. That is enough for them."

A slight pause ensured, but was finally broken by Fuyutski again. "Is that why you called for the re-development of Tokyo 3. to improve our defence lines against an invasion of SEELE's troops? They won't fall for that and you know it, Ikari!" he refuted the idea.

"All in the name of re-developing the city for future residents. After all, Tokyo 3 currently holds very little population with the recent Angel attacks. But now that all the angels are defeated, the government can't possibly deny our right to rebuild the city. And within that rebuilding package, a large portion of the money goes to development of our defences. As long as our records are kept clean, they would never know where the money had gone to." A very long speech for the Commander of Nerv, though necessary to explain his plans to the still undecided Fuyutski.

+Clever bastard+, thought the second in command of Nerv, Professor Fuyutski.

A longer silence ensured the productive rethinking on Fuyutski's mind, though he couldn't find any more arguments to state forward.

Ikari, taking his silence as acceptance, continued: "However, that is not all of our concerns."

Fuyutski, drifting back to the original topic of discussion replied: "Yeah, who knows what those old men have up their sleeve. We better be careful from now on."

[In the secret Conference rooms of SEELE]

SEELE 05: Ikari is using the redevelopment fund to improve their defences.

SEELE 03: That bastard!

SEELE 01: It matters little what Ikari does. Destiny will not be denied.

SEELE 02: We should deploy the sentinels immediately, before their defences are finished.

SEELE 07: The Eva 5 Series and the angel copies are not yet ready. We will have to improvise.

SEELE 05: What should we do then?

SEELE 04: I have a proposal.

SEELE 02: Then share with us this suggestion.

SEELE 04: Nerv's ultimate weapon are the Evas. But the Evas are useless unless they have pilots. I suggest we take out the hybrid pilots first, especially the pilot of Evangelion Unit one, since it is the most advance and complete model.

SEELE 07: A good proposal, Let's take out all the pilots.

SEELE 01: So be it. It will be done. Ikari, feel the wrath of SEELE for your betrayal.

[Misato's Apartment]

Shinji's voice rang through the deserted hallway of his home: "I'm home!. Not that any one really cares."

Shinji plopped his bag of groceries on the kitchen table and started putting all of them away. He took a small glance at Asuka's room in contemplation.

+I wonder if she is hungry?+

Shinji made a small plate of sandwiches and brought them outside of Asuka's room. He knocked once, no reply. He knocked on the door again, this time louder, but still no reply from the depressed girl.

Shinji called out: "Asuka! Lunch is ready!"

Silence was his answer.

Shinji called out again, wishing for a reply, any kind of reply, even if it was an insult. "Do you want me to put it on the floor?"

Again, all he received was silence.

+Something is wrong. By now, she usually opens the door, grab her lunch and shuts it again. Something is wrong, I just know it!+

Shinji slides the door open slightly, creating a small gap to see through. His eyes widen a little and Shinji slid the door completely open, only to reveal an empty room.

Shinji whispered to himself: "Did she runaway again?... It figures."

He sighed and shut the door close slowly. He then tried to shake away his depression and loneliness when a sickening sensation travelled up his spine and made him shiver.

Shinji, eyes wide but still whispering: "No! This isn't right."

Then, a horrific idea entered Shinji's mind and he rushed to the bathroom and slide that door open violently. His eyes bulged and his heart skipped several beats.

Lying in a pool of blood in the bath tub is Asuka's naked body, both her hands has been slit.

"AAAAAASSSSSUUUUUKKKKKKAAAAA!!!!!"

Shinji immediately rushes to Asuka's side and pulled her out of the freezing cold water that was stained red with her blood. He then grabbed a near by towel, wrapped it around her body then carried her to the lounge. His mind was racing so fast with possibilities of what he should be doing that he couldn't even consciously stop his body from moving. He realised that this was a life and death situation. He cannot make a single mistake. In fact, it seems to him that some one else has taken over his body and not the real Shinji. For the first time in his life, Shinji is not undecisive in what he should do next.

Next, Shinji quickly checked her pulse and breathing. "Still breathing, heart still beating though slow, good."

He picked up the phone and dialled for emergency assistance and then called Nerv to inform Misato of the event. He then tried his best to bandage up the cut on Asuka's wrist as best he could to stop the bleeding. Then he tried to dry Asuka's body and warm it up from being exposed to cold water to long. Within a minute, the ambulances have arrived and they took both the self-inflicted suicide victim and Shinji to the hospital. Siren's were heard as the emergency vehicle rushes through the empty streets. The chaotic sounds reflects Shinji's heart and mind even though he did not show any sign of his childish fears on his face, only displaying a look of worry.

+Asuka! You must live! You don't want to die! Not yet! Not like this! Not like this!+ Shinji continue to silently reassure himself.

[Hospital]

Misato arrived at the hospital a few minutes later. She found Shinji sitting in the lobby with a blank expression on his face. His shirt was stained with Asuka's blood.

+He must still be in shock, poor kid.+

Misato decided not to interrupt him, she ran to the doctor in charge and asked about Asuka's condition.

The doctor replied softly to Misato's concern: "The child's life is not in any danger. And her condition has stabled. It's just that she lost a lot of blood and must stay in the hospital to recover."

Misato sighed in relief: "Thank you doctor. Can I go see her now?"

The doctor nodded: "Yes, you may. But she is still unconscious and she needs plenty of rest.

Misato replied firmly: "Understood."

And with that said, the doctor leaves. Misato then turned around and realised that the seat that Shinji had been sitting in a minute ago was empty. She turned her attention back towards the direction of Asuka's room and started walking there.

Misato opened the door to the room numbered 303 slowly and quietly. She saw a figure already seated next to the sleeping yet injured second child. Shinji simply stared quietly at the unconscious girl in which he had helped save with a look of emptiness in his eyes.

+Why?! Asuka, why did you do that? Am I so repulsed that you would rather die than face me? Am I so useless that I can't help you? Am I so unworthy of your time?+

A single tear travelled down Shinji's pale white face and he started out of his musing. He tentatively touched one of these watery droplets and held it in front of him. "Tears?"

+Can I still cry? I haven't cried since Kawuru's death. I thought I'd lost all of my emotions by now. Guess not.+ Shinji thought indifferently. +I still care. And because I care, I can feel pain. and I can cry.+

Shinji lowers his head down, his hair covering his dark blue eyes. These same eyes which has seen too much sorrow and pain; the very same eyes that can become cold and expressionless, even with tears flowing out of it freely.

Misato said quietly, as if not to disturb the peace too much: "You did the right thing, Shinji."

Shinji remains silent.

Misato remains silent.

The both remain silent for the rest of their visit.

[On the Other Side of the City]

Rei walks quietly down an empty street with a book in front of her face. She was not looking where she was going but there was no point in doing so anyway. The streets are empty, without cars or people to bump into and she knows this path well since she uses it all the time.

Rei steps off the sidewalk and onto the road, still with the book in front of her. Rei strode comfortably across the road. What she didn't notice was that her enemies had been waiting for her.

Once she reached the middle of the 3 lane road, suddenly out of nowhere appeared a speeding black Mercedes with dark tinted windows. It was racing at a high speed towards Rei and it didn't slow

down at all. Rei only had time to take one glance at the dangerous car and then felt the impact of it ramming right into her.

Rei didn't remember anything after that. She did not remember the tremendous pain she felt when her body was hit by the front of the car, her books flying out of her hands, her body rolling over the car as if in slow motion, nor did she remember the final sharp pain as her head impacts on the ground. The Mercedes car did not stop as it sped away running over Rei's fallen book.

Red blood slowly sips out of Rei's head and stained both her school dress and the cold, hard floor. When it reached the scattered pages of the ruined book, it stained the pages red too.

Within seconds, the security personnel assigned to watch Rei are by her side, checking if she is alive and sending her to the hospital immediately.

[Hospital room 303]

ring. ring. ring.

Misato picked up her cell phone. "Yes. What?!" She shouted. "How did that happen?!" Pause. "Have you contacted the commanders?.. Okay.. Okay.. I'll be right on it."

Shinji stayed in silent curiosity as to what emergency even happened to make Misato turn even paler than she was before.

Misato moved her worried gaze upon him and explained the situation: "Rei. has been involved in a car accident. She is in the emergency room now. I'm going to see her. If you want to come, you can."

Shinji remains silent.

Misato sighed: "It's up to you, Shinji. You decide."

Misato turned around and walked towards the door. She opened it, walked out of the room and closed it quietly, without speaking any further.

Shinji's face is pale and blank, his eyes cold and expressionless, but there is a sheering pain in his heart. Slowly but surely, he uttered one word into the silent room: "Rei."

[Gendo Ikari's Office]

Fuyutski's outraged voice filled the normally quite room: "What happened to Rei?!"

Commander Ikari, though seeming calm, was furiously raging on the inside. "SEELE's doing."

Fuyutski was unable to control his expression behind such a cold façade. "SEELE is directly targeting the Children! Those Old Bastards!" He exclaimed.

Ikari's indifferent voice replied back simply, as if stating the obvious: "Once all the hybrid pilots are dead, there will be no one to pilot the Evas."

Fuyutski took a deep breath, trying to calm down then continued: "Now what do we do? We've already got two of the pilots in the hospital, one in a critical condition. Do we push up security on the last remaining pilot?"

Ikari answered softly: "We are already too late."

Fuyutski blinked at his commander, eyes widening in realisation. He immediately grabbed the near by phone: "Get me Major Katsuragi! NOW!!"

[Hospital room 303]

The door slid open silently. A dark figure entered. Shinji did not notice, and even if he did, he didn't seem to care. All his attention

was focused of the sleeping form of the second child. A silence pistol was pulled out of the dark figure's black coat pocket and held directly behind Shinji's head. An evil smile appeared on the dark figure's face. He steadied his aim and finger on the trigger. Click! BANG!

[SEELE SECRET COUNCIL]

SEELE 05: Are all the children dead yet?

SEELE 03: Not yet but they will be soon.

SEELE 07: The first child is in a critical condition but the second is stable.

SEELE 04: It matters little. The second can no longer pilot anyway so we can disregard her.

SEELE 02: Ikari must be feeling the pain of loosing his most precious possession by now.

SEELE 05: But Rei is not dead yet.

SEELE 02: It wasn't Rei that I was referring to.

SEELE 05: I do not understand.

SEELE 01: Indeed. Ikari's ultimate lost is not that of the clone of his wife, but it is his last remaining family legacy.

SEELE 02: His son. Shinji Ikari.

[Hospital room 303]

A figure fell on the floor. Blood flowing freely out of a massive hole on the back of his head, a result from a bullet shot at point blank range.

Shinji looked down emotionlessly on the figure whom just tried to kill him. Then his gaze turned towards Misato who still held her gun, visible fumes still coming out of the gun.

Shinji asked her, though cold in his tone of voice, his eyes plead for an answer: "Why?"

Misato looked sadly back into his eyes, determined: "Because I don't want you to die. Because I still care about you. And you should too."

A small smile appeared on Shinji's pale face. "Thank you."

Misato pulled her gun away and looked back at him, then smiled the only sincere smile in a long time. "You're welcomed, kiddo."

Within a few minutes, the body of the assassin had been dragged away and the blood on the floor cleaned up. Shinji and Misato had also left Asuka's room together, walking towards Rei's new room. Leaving behind a heavily guarded Room 303, with security cameras and security personnel's watching over it 24 hours a day.

Rei had just recovered from her surgery and is now in a stable condition, though unconscious.

Shinji held Rei's pale hands in his own, just as he had done with Asuka, two rooms away. He whispered to the sleeping child: "Rei, don't die. Fight back."

Fighting against tears, Shinji shook his head slightly but continued with a sad smile. "You're only starting to live, to feel, to understand. Don't stop now. Don't let them stop you now. Don't give up, you're not a doll. You're no longer a puppet to be played with and ordered around. You have worth, you're the last and the only Rei Ayanami. You cannot be replaced, not by anyone or anything, because you are you and only you."

Upon the pale girl's features, a small but tentative smile appeared.

Misato nods in appreciation. Shinji has finally overcome his fears over Rei being a clone of his mother. He knows now that she isn't just a clone, or a copy. She is Rei Ayanami, the first and foremost. His words can become her strength, the strength to find herself.

[Gendo Ikari's Office]

Fuyutski sighed in relief. "All the pilots are now secure. SEELE's plan has failed."

Ikari, still unmoved. "Not entirely."

Fuyutski, puzzled by the commander's two word answer, asked back: "What do you mean?"

Ikari answered: "The pilot of Eva unit Two is useless for she is already unable to pilot the Eva, so she is irrelevant. And Rei is currently unable to synchronise completely with Eva Unit Zero. The only card we have up our sleeve is the pilot of Eva Unit One."

Fuyutski, understanding the situation better now, recommended the next actions: "Then we will post triple, quadruple guards around him, including the Major."

Ikari shook his head in denial, opposing such an undertaking. "No, Fuyutski. Tokyo 3 is no longer a safe place for Shinji."

Unconsciously, Ikari had referred to his son as Shinji, not the pilot of Eva Unit One, or as the third child.

Fuyutski confused once again. "Then what do you plan to do? Move him?"

Ikari smiles slightly though it was covered by his folded fingers. His eyes sparkled with hidden amusement behind his dark, cold spectacles.

Finally! Finished the Prologue. Hopefully, Chapter 1 will be up soon. Please! PLEASE!! Read and Review. I will most definitely post up Chapter 1 but if no one reviews, then I might as well quit. I'm not asking for much. Just 3 will be enough for lil ol me! ^_^ So READ AND REVIEW NOW!!!

Missing

Reply to Reviews:

DI4852001: I don't think Shinji is needed for the Instrumentality Project at all. All that SEELE really needs to jump-start the Instrumentality Project is to merge Rei with Lillith and then control the outcome. In the movie, it was Rei's decision to use Shinji as the catalyst. In this story, SEELE will be using the Eva 5 series to merge with Lillith, so they wouldn't need Rei or Shinji at all, since the dummy plug system of the Eva 5 series is (literary) Rei. *It's a really interesting question, thanks for putting it into my attention.* Oh just to give you a hint. In this story, SEELE does not attack Nerv headquarters directly after the death of the last angel.

Star Mage: Original? Wow.. never thought of it as that before.
Thanks! ^_^

RichardRahl: Asuka/Shinji huh? I guess I can try. But don't blame me if it turns out REALLY crap. Oh and remember, since Shinji and Asuka will be separated for a VERY long time. If there is any romance, it'll come in some of the later chapters, so please be patient.

E: I'll try to keep things as "interesting" as possible. Thanks!

What!: Um... Shinji/Maya? Wow.. I've never heard of that particular pairing before. But.. I've sort of got someone planned for Maya.. .;; So just keep on reading and then tell me what you think.

Thank you all for reviewing and please continue to encourage me!

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NO romantic pairings between 14-year-old teenagers as of yet. It depends on what you guys really want. But I'll warn you now, I SUCK at Romance. ^_^ Okay, now on with the story. ^_^

Warning: Swearing. Uh... A lot of psychological crap on Ritsuko's part. I do try, really, I do..

+.....+ means thoughts *.....* Author's thoughts [...] change of environment

Title: Finding Strength to Live

Chapter 1: Missing?!

[Misato's Apartment]

ring... ring... ring...

The door to Shinji's room slid open abruptly revealing a very tired and annoyed Shinji.

Shinji grumbled to himself: "Who would be calling at this hour? It's half past Two in the morning, for God's sake!"

+It could be an emergency from Misato, I guess. But she's on night duty. What kind of emergency could she run into? And Asuka is still in the hospital so who would be calling now?+

ring... ring... ring...

Shinji increased his walking speed in the direction towards the phone. However, due to the fact that he did not turn on the lights beforehand, it is very dark and he kept on bumping into things in the room.

THUMP!!

"OW!! STUPID TABLE!" Shinji cursed under his breath as he rubbed his sore hips for hitting the corner of their wooden table. Then he winced as his knee came in contact with the couch. +GOD DAMN IT! WHO'S CALLING!!??+

ring... ring... ring...

Frustrated, Shinji shouted into the empty room, as if willing the phone to keep its pants on. "Alright! I'm coming! I'm coming!! Stupid phone!"

Finally, Shinji picked up the phone violently and practically yelled into it to whoever was on the other end. "Yeah WHAT!" Shinji shouted angrily.

On the other end of the line, someone coughed: "...".

Shinji immediately felt his anger leave his body as he recognised the voice of the person whom had coughed so inconspicuously.

"Father???" He didn't know why his father was calling him at this time of the night and he didn't even know why he still kept referring to that man as 'father', but right now, his shock had overwhelmed all other emotion.

On the other end, Commander Ikari replied, cutting through Shinji's thoughts: "Listen to me, Shinji, this is very important."

+Why would father be calling me at this hour? And why would _he_ calling me by my name? He's never done that before!+

Not knowing of Shinji's current confusion, or knowing it but ignoring the fact, Commander Ikari continued with his instructions. "Don't turn on the light, go to your room, and start gathering some of your important belongings. Pack them up and come down to the ground floor of this building."

Shinji is still thoroughly confused by his father's actions and asked: "Father?! But why? What's going on?"

Ikari was adamant though: "Don't ask. This is for your own safety... And the Major is waiting as well."

Shinji was further put into shock: "Misato???" +What's going on?+

The commander cut through Shinji's thoughts again for a second time that night: "Just do as I say, Shinji. Once you are down, there will be a van waiting for you. Get in it and the driver will take you to some place safe."

Shinji wanted to rebuff and ask for a better explanation: "But Father! I don't understand! Why..." But it was to no use, since Commander Ikari had just hanged up the line.

Shinji stared at the phone in his hand strangely. He debated with himself whether he should do what his father had just told him to do. After a while, he finally came to a decision. For the safety of Misato, he will follow his father's orders just this once.

With that decision made, Shinji packed together a small backpack filled with his valuables, most of which are of sentimental value instead of capital value. However, he left behind his SDAT player, of which he had forgotten in his ongoing confusion.

Once finished with packing, he rushed outside the apartment and locked the doors, ran down the stairs instead of taking the elevator and arrived on the ground floor of the apartment building in slight exhaustion. Indeed, outside the front doors was a black van waiting for his arrival. Shinji took a deep breath, calming his nerves, and ran towards the suspicious van. However, he stopped himself just a few feet away from it, still wary as to what is currently happening.

Shinji took another deep breath and tried to ask the people in the van (for which he knew there were some) what is going on. He had a feeling that this would be his last chance to turn back if he really wanted to, and he was afraid of taking another step forward without really knowing what he is committing himself to.

"My father said that you were..."

However, before Shinji had the time to finish what he wanted to say, the side of the van opened and out jumped three large men. All of them in camouflaged in black, Shinji panicked. They grabbed him swiftly and pulled him into the van. Once all of them were inside, the door slide shut and the driver immediately started driving away. Shinji, in his panicked state, realised something. +Could this be a trap?!+

Trying desperately to calm down but hopelessly failing, Shinji tried to ask: "What! ... Who are you?..."

Once again, Shinji was interrupted in his questions as those same three men grabbed at him. One held him by the arms from behind, another gagged him with a cloth that contained some kind of sleeping potion. In his panicked state, Shinji breathed in the gas and he immediately started to feel tired and knew that he was trapped for good.

+MISATO! HELP ME MISATO!! HELP ME!! SOMEBODY HELP ME!!!! Why... Father...?+

Shinji slowly fell asleep, unable to fight a losing battle.

Shinji's left eye opened slightly as he fought for consciousness, but he is still terribly tired, being under the influence of the drug. His vision is blurred and the sounds that surrounds him seem to merge into one then fade, and then become strong again. He was very confused by the blurred images his tired eyes gathered.

+Weren't I in a van of some sort?+ His mind slowly detached itself from dreamland to impart with reality slightly. With some effort, Shinji tried to survey his new surrounding.

Instead of the hard surface of van, Shinji now finds himself in a very comfortable backseat of a car with dark tinted windows. Outside the

window, he could make out the shape of the rising sun.

+Is it morning already?+ His tired mind supplied.

Shinji realised that he sat on the left hand side of the car. Turning to face the right side, he could distinctly make out a shape of a person. Even though his vision is still blurred but Shinji to tell that this person was male. The man was silhouetted from the light of the rising sun, and Shinji couldn't see the face properly at all, though he could tell the man was wearing glasses. Suddenly, Shinji's mind supplied a shocking realisation. +Father?+

Shinji fell unconscious again.

The next time Shinji reawakened, he could feel that the drugs were still in his system and he thought to himself. +The drugs they used on me must have been strong.+

Once again, his vision is blurred and the sounds unclear. He seemed to be lying on a much more comfortable bed in some kind of bedroom. +Well, at least it's not a hospital room.+ Shinji thought sarcastically.

The room was very neat, the furniture, curtains and everything else having a specific place within it. The bright sunlight shone through the open window and onto Shinji, slightly burning his eyes. Shinji decided to shut his eyes and concentrate more on listening on the conversation that was currently happening outside this room.

There were two voices, one of a more mature and elderly man, the other younger but seemingly more knowledgeable. After listening for a few seconds, Shinji recognised the voice of the mature man, it belonged to his father, Gendo Ikari. It was easy to figure him out due to the cold and stern tone of voice he always harbours. However, Shinji did not recognise the other person's voice at all.

The conversation he heard goes like this:

Ikari: "Everything went according as planned. Nothing is amiss."

Voice: "Do you really think this is the right way to do? Stealing him away from the Major's guardianship. You never even asked him what he thinks, did you?"

Ikari: "That is none of my concerns."

Voice: "Huh! And you're his father!"

Ikari: "From now on, he is your responsibility... I expect results."

Voice: "Whatever! You just want other people to do what you cannot."

Ikari: "Call it whatever you want to..."

Shinji couldn't fight the drugs anymore as he fell into unconsciousness again. His last thoughts were +Who is that person? What is father doing? Misato. Misato!?!+

[Misato's Apartment]

"Shinji! I'm home!" Misato shouted into the room, expecting a reply but was only met by silence.

"Shinji!" inquired Misato, showing a bit of concern. After the previous assassination attempt on Shinji's life, Misato has begun to get very worried about him.

She went to his room and swung open his door only to find an empty bed. With that, Misato started searching the rest of the house in anxiety. The house was completely empty.

Misato whispered to herself: "What the...?"

Forcing herself to calm down and think logically, she rang for security about Shinji's whereabouts. However, to her surprise, the security

personnel had no idea he was even gone from the apartment.

Misato slammed the phone down after swearing at their incompetence and started muttering to herself. "STUPID idiots! Security must be dragging its ASS!"

After ringing up several other sections of Nerv control, she then commanded a citywide search for the missing third child. All Nerv personnel are on the look out for him, they have been ordered to search every room, every square metre within the city until they've found him.

+Damn it Shinji! Where are you? Commander Ikari isn't here so I'm in charge and then _this_ happen right under my nose! Where could you be, Shinji? WHERE ARE YOU?!+ Misato thought to herself anxiously.

The search started from 7 o'clock in the morning up until 3 o'clock in the afternoon and still, no one had found Shinji Ikari.

[Nerv Headquarters]

Since commander Ikari is not here, it is the responsibility of the Second in Command, Commander Fuyutski to inquire about the disappearance of the third child.

"On 0230 hours this morning, thei third child went missing and the security personnel lost track of how he had disappeared. At o700 hours, a citywide search was set up to search for the third child. Now it is 1500 hours, what is the result from the search?" Commander Fuyutski asked in a stern tone.

Aoba took a step forward and nervously relayed the answer: "No trace of him have been found, sir."

Hyuga took this opportunity to input his own opinions: "Whoever is responsible, they are professionals, sir. To be able to plan it so well,

knowing the exact time of our shift changes, and planned in advance so that none of the security or the cameras detected their actions, prove that they are highly skilled in what they do."

Fuyutsuki stood in silence for a while, seething at the undesirable answers. "So what is your plan, Major?"

Misato stood absolutely still, knowing that the pressure is on her to produce some results. "Continue the search, sir." It was all she could say.

Though outwardly calm, Major Misato Katsuragi is probably the one person with the most raging emotion hidden inside her.

+There is no way that they could avoid all detection, could they? Who ever they are, if they lay one finger on Shinji, I'm gonna make them PAY!!! Could this be the work of SEELE? The only person I know that is able to pull these kinds of disappearances is... already dead. Who could be responsible?+

[Shinji's current whereabouts]

Shinji slowly opened his eyes and blinked them until they could focus properly. The effect of the drugs have finally worn off. He looked outside the window, the sun is going down.

Shinji blinked again and said softly to no one in particular: "Is it afternoon, already?" He didn't expect a reply and was startled when a voice called out to him.

"Oh! You're finally awake, huh?"

Shinji turned his in the direction of the voice and found himself looking at someone he had never met before. Standing in front on his door is a young man, probably in his early twenties. He had short, chestnut brown hair that glistened with gold reflection while directly under sunlight. The man's sky-blue eyes were directed at

Shinji with complete attention. In fact, the young man looked a lot similar to Shinji, if only an older version of him.

The young man smiled a light but genuine smile at him. For reasons unknown, Shinji does not feel threatened by this stranger.

After a short staring contest, the stranger decided to break the silence first. He threw a non-descript file folder at Shinji and it landed right in his hands. Shinji looked at it curiously, showing the stranger his confusion with an arched eyebrow, waiting for some explanation. The man just smiled again, and put down the plate of sliced up fruits on the table next to Shinji's bed.

Tired of waiting for a response, Shinji began the conversation: "What is this?" indicating the yellow folder.

The young man looked up at him and said simply: "It's your file. Open it and you'll understand."

Shinji looked at the man suspiciously before curiosity won and he opened the file gently. The first thing he saw was a large photo of himself in school uniform, the same picture that had been used to identify him as the third child when he came to Tokyo 3 for the first time. Shinji disregarded his photo and flipped to the next sheet. This time, his eyes widened a bit at the information present there that are highlighted so they stand out.

Shinji looked at the man again and said quietly: "It says here that my name is... Akira... Akira Tendo..?" Not sure what to expect, Shinji looked at the man for any confirmation.

The stranger smiled, grabbed a nearby chair, dragged it closer to the boy and sat on it straddling the back of it, arms folding around the back rest. "Yup! That is your new identity."

Shinji blinked at him.

The young man chuckled at Shinji's blank yet confused expression and decided to stop hanging the boy in mid air by giving him a full explanation. "Okay, let me explain. _You_ (point at Shinji with his right index finger) are in danger in Tokyo 3 because a secret organisation known as SEELE is after you. Your father (here, he scrunched up his nose a bit in distaste) wanted to protect you so he _moved_ you here and made it look as if you've been kidnapped. Now you will have to live here for a time with a new name and a new identity."

The stranger paused a bit for effect as well as to let Shinji swallow all that, then he continued with his explanation. "By the way, my name is Takashi, Takashi Tendo. And I'm going to be your brother."

Shinji blinked again and his jaw dropped open slightly.

Takashi was taken back by Shinji's shocked expression and couldn't hide his amused smirk. "Don't worry, you've got a whole week to memories all those information in your new file as well as to get use to me. After that, we'll have to get you enrolled in school."

Shinji squeaked: "school?"

"Yep! But for now, read over new identity file and if your hungry, eat some fruit. If you need anything else, I'll be right outside in the living room, okay kid? Just follow the television noise." With that said, Takashi nodded at Shinji and left him to his own demise for a while.

Once again alone, Shinji shivered a bit at how much his life had changed so much with this new twist. "Man! I've only been asleep a few hours, and my life has turned upside down. God! I wish Misato was here."

[Nerv Headquarters]

The supreme commander of Nerv strode confidently into the room and immediately started giving out orders. "Call off the search,

Major!"

Misato's head jerked at the commander's orders, wondering why.
"But Commander..."

Ikari narrowed his eyes behind his dark glasses and said in an icy tone. "That is an order, Major."

Misato just barely strained herself from launching at the Commander. A wave of cold fury raged inside of her but she kept it in tight control and only said one word in reply. "Understood."

The commander gaze silently at Misato's rigid posture for a minute longer before he strode confidently out of the conference room, leaving the rumour mill to make up whatever they wish.

It surprised every one that Commander Ikari would suddenly return from his mysterious trip and then immediately disbanded the search for his own son. The act, in itself, led to many suspicions of his involvement in the third child's untimely disappearance. While the rest of the staff contented to themselves with secret discussions on the matter, afraid of being targeted by the Commander, Major Misato Katsuragi refused to be left behind in the dark, especially on matters concerning Shinji. Once the search has been completely disbanded, Misato stormed into the Commander's office and demanded to know where he had taken Shinji.

"Okay Commander, WHAT have you done with Shinji?" Misato glared hotly at both Commanders.

Fuyutski, put off by Misato's unprofessional behaviour, immediately interjected: "Major Katsuragi! Be careful of your tone of voice when speaking to your seniors!"

Ikari, on the other hand, doesn't seem phased at all. "Let her be, Fuyutski."

Misato continues to glare at them, failing to come her anger, frustration and anxiety. "Commander Ikari. As the LEGAL GUARDIAN of the third child, I have the RIGHT to know where is his location currently!"

Before she could continue her rant, Ikari interrupted her. "I am relieving you of your legal guardianship over the third child. He is now in the care of someone else, and is therefore no longer of your concern. You may be excused."

Misato stood still at this shocked announcement, but was soon overwhelmed by anger. "YOU CAN'T @#\$%ING DOOO THAT!!! WHERE THE HELL HAVE YOU TAKEN SHINJI!! YOU @SSHOLE!!!"

Fuyutski, having seen enough. "MAJOR KATSURAGI!! THIS IS YOUR FINAL WARNING!!!"

Fuyutski was hovering over pressing the button to call on security. That is, until the Commander Ikari waved Fuyutski to stop. He simply looked straight at the Major and spoke to her firmly. "He is in a safe place. There is nothing for you to worry about."

Misato is currently breathing heavily, her fist shook with the desire to punch Ikari in the face, but she spoke as calmly as she possibly could. "Where can be safer then here with me and Nerv to watch his back?"

Ikari replied immediately: "with his family, of course."

Fuyutski looked back at Ikari with confusion in his eyes. He knows very well that Shinji did not have any relative left other than his father. "Ikari??"

Ikari glanced sideway at Fuyutski, his eyes firm, indicating that he does not wish to speak anymore on this matter.

Misato also stumbled over that last revelation. "You mean... he is with his teacher? The one that took care of him before he came here?"

Misato looked up at the Commander in hope of some sign, but the commander just remained silent. Misato took that silence as a 'yes' and turned around to leave the office.

Just before Misato reached the doors, the commander called out to her. "Major, you can tell the guards to release Doctor Akagi from her cell and bring her up to see me."

Misato didn't reply or turn around to acknowledge that command, she just brushed right through the door leaving the two men alone in the silent room.

Fuyutsuki looked back at Ikari, hoping he would at least answer to him. "Ikari, is Shinji really with his teacher?"

The supreme commander of Nerv only had an evil smile on his face as answer.

+GOD DAMN BASTARD! WHAT HAVE YOU DONE WITH MY SHINJI AND WHAT DO YOU PLAN TO DO WITH RITSUKO?!+

An hour later, Doctor Ritsuko Akagi stands alone outside of the office belonging to the supreme commander of Nerv, Gendo Ikari, her ex-lover. She awaits patiently, though a bit anxious for the door to open. Finally, the dark doors slide open to let the Doctor in.

In the dark room, brightened up only by artificial lights, both the roof and floor are plastered with the designs of the tree of life, the origins of mankind. And seated behind his large desk in the middle of the room is the Commander himself, still with his hands clasped together covering his mouth as always.

Ritsuko's nerves sang as she watched her ex-lover in silence. It took a great amount of courage and determination to finally calm herself enough to speak properly. "I heard you have a use for me." She said coldly.

Commander Ikari studied the woman standing in front of him. Though visibly nervous of this particular encounter, it is easy to see that this Ritsuko is very different from the woman he had bedded and used for many years. The woman standing in front of him now has hope and self-worth, two things both the Ritsuko that he knew and her mother did not have. Finally, he decided to talk. "I want you to help Rei synchronise with Evangelion unit one."

Ritsuko was confused at his admission, wondering what would have caused the commander to try again with Rei and Eva unit one. Ignoring her inner thoughts on Ikari, she concentrated on her job, the only thing keeping her alive. "Why? What about Shinji?"

The commander remained silent.

Ritsuko bit her tongue, realising too late that he would not appreciate such a question. She continued though: "What else would you have me do?"

"Reprogram the Magi for to handle any strategic battle systems, hackers inquiry, and enhance the computational weaponry within Nerv Central."

Ritsuko was just about to ask 'why' again, when the commander answered her silent question immediately. "SEELE will launch their attack on Nerv soon. They are too confident in their power."

Ritsuko's eyes widened at his suggestion. Her surprise is not due to the fact that SEELE would invade Nerv, that was a definite; it actually surprised her that the Commander would care at all about his subordinate working in Nerv to ask her to strengthen their defences. But Ikari, once again, interrupted her thoughts.

"And Doctor, I want you to upgrade all the weaponries of the Evas as well as attain certain conventional weapons to be at our disposal, preferably those that can withstand the N2 bombs. I want Nerv to be prepared for any emergency. Do you understand me?"

"Yes si," was Ritsuko's meek reply.

"You are dismissed, Doctor."

Ritsuko nodded to the Commander, turned and return to the door that she had walked through before hand. Just before her hand touched the handle, Ikari's voice rang back one last time. "And Doctor, do not fail me again." There was a warning in that sentence, Ritsuko gulped and left the office in a slight hurry.

Once outside of the Commander's office, Ritsuko breathed a sigh of relief. In so many years of working for Nerv, this was the first time that she had actually felt scared to be in the Commander's presence. Yes, she had been used by him, fell in love with him for a very long time, and then started to despise him as well. +Love is such a contradictory thing. The opposite of hate is not love, it's indifference. (1)+ Ritsuko thought.

For a long time during her stay in the empty cell where she was kept, Ritsuko felt used and abused. She hated Ikari, and she hated herself. She hated the fact that she was in love with him, and to him, she was only a tool. She wallowed in self-pity and depression, relived her past memories of her mother and compared them to herself. She almost went so far as to commit suicide if only to escape the helpless feeling that was eating her alive. But it was also in that abyss of hell, that she finally found her atonement. If it was so easy for her to fall in love with Ikari, then it should be just as easy for her to fall out of love. Considering she doesn't truly love the Commander, mainly because she doesn't understand him at all, then she should be able to find the strength to let him go.

It took a while, but she reviewed all her intimate moments with him and she realised, she had also just been using him. She was lonely

and wanted desperately to find a way out of becoming her mother's shadow that she went so far as to become just like her mother. She knew of her mother's relationship with the Commander and the fact that her mother had failed to win his love. For some strange reason or another, she had believed she could succeed where her mother had failed. To surpass her mother's genius, Ritsuko not only pursued to become a better scientist, she also tried to prove to herself that she was better than her mother by finishing what her mother could not, to earn the love of a man whom have no heart to give.

After finally realising that, it was a slow process for her to recover her self worth. She made a vow to herself that she would NOT end up like her mother. If her mother chose to keep the man she loved by dying and staying with him, then Ritsuko would choose to die with more dignity than rely on another man. Ritsuko knew her chances of survival were thin, paper-thin in fact. She was no longer a doll, but she still had her uses. If she would be able to slide her way out of the commander's clutches than she's a free woman. That was her hope, that there is light at the end of the tunnel, that there is a way for her to escape the same path her mother had followed.

Back to the presence, Ritsuko also realised that this meant she had to be extra careful about when in the commander's presence. She knew that Ikari knew she no longer had any emotional attachments connected to him, so he might find another way to control her. She is still a useful pawn in this war game played by Gendo Ikari against SEELE. With the angels gone, Nerv's real enemy had finally surfaced, man himself, SEELE.

[Maya's apartment]

"Are you sure I can move in with you, Maya? I don't want to intrude or anything..." Ritsuko had been very nervous when Maya suggested she move in with her when they all found out that Ritsuko's residents had been demolished for reconstruction.

"Oh no, it's no problem at all, Ritsuko-sempai. I'm just glad you're finally out. It's such a relief to see that you're well." Maya smiled at Ritsuko as she helped carry some of Ritsuko's belongings into her apartment.

After an hour of cleaning up and reorganising the furniture to fit all of Ritsuko's belongings (mainly computers and other technological items) in the room, they both decided to take a bit of rest. That was when Ritsuko remembered the question that the Commander had never answered. "By the way, Maya. What happened to Shinji? I don't quite understand why he wanted Rei to synchronise with Evangelion unit one when he has Shinji."

"You mean you don't KNOW?!" Maya exclaimed and Ritsuko could only shake her head in answer.

Maya stayed silent for a while, gathering her thoughts on how to explain the situation to her senior. Once all her thoughts have been gathered into a logical order, she started her explanation.

"Well, you know about how Asuka and Rei were taken into the hospital right?" At this point, Maya looked at Ritsuko for confirmation, which came in a nod. Ritsuko was called in to have a look at both the girl's physical status and to evaluate when they could pilot the Evas again. When at the hospital, Ritsuko had inquired the doctors there what had happened and they had told her the truth.

"Well, after that incident with the assassin in the hospital, security was stepped up. On the very next night, the Major had night duty, so Shinji was left at home alone. It was during that night... that Shinji disappeared. When the Major arrived back in the morning and found him missing, she immediately called for a citywide search. The search stretched for a whole day, they even went up to the mountains to search but no sign of Shinji was found. When commander Ikari returned from his trip to who knows where, he just called off the search entirely."

Ritsuko frowned as she thinks about it. "That means that the commander has taken Shinji away... without even consulting or informing Misato?" She looked dubiously at Maya, whom only nodded in return.

"That's what the rumours say anyway. You should have seen the Major's face when commander Ikari called off the search. She looked like a volcano waiting to erupt!" exclaimed Maya.

Ritsuko nodded, she could imagine how Misato would react to that. "When it comes to Shinji, Misato is like an over-protective mother hen. So, what else happened after that?" She asked.

Maya shifted uneasily. "Well, the Major stormed into the Commander's office demanding to know where Shinji is kept, and he only told her that Shinji is with his teacher. You know? The one he lived with before he moved here."

Ritsuko nodded again in understanding. "Yeah, then what?"

Maya shifted closer to Ritsuko as if afraid that someone might be listening in. She whispered: "The Major rang the teacher's residents up but the person there said that Shinji never returned and they haven't heard a word from him since he moved here."

Ritsuko blinked. "So the commander still have him hidden some where..."

Maya nodded and the two of them remained silent for the rest of the time.

(1) Umm.. I know I've heard that quote somewhere before but I don't remember where. So just warning you guys that this quote isn't mine.

Alright, so what do you all think? Read and review, tell me anything you want.

Oh yeah, I also have a request to make. I don't really like the title of this story so if there is anyone out there that has thought up a better name for this story, please either email it to me or review. PLEASE! THANKS A BUNCH!!

A warning to all of you though, I'm currently working on 2 stories at the same time, so I might slow down with the upcoming updates and stuff. Please continue with the review and I'll definitely try to keep up with the demand. Thank you all!